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Universities and colleges in Flanders. Reflection on case studies

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1. Nature of the change processes

1. Structural vs cultural

Both

- the governmental educational policies in question are a mixture of facilitation, provisional facilitation and management by speech;
- the universities are partly motivated and partly not motivated to implement these policies;
- the policies have varying success.

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Flemish academic culture is to a large extent egalitarian,
which implies the following:

- collective strategies aimed at equal sharing of losses and gains are primary;
- academics control most aspects of their own work and do not have sufficient power to control the work of other academics;
- non-intervention principles between academics, departments, and faculties are dominant.

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2. Some changes are comprehensive others are not
Comprehensive changes (e.g. transparency of programmes),
but not related to our three issues.

3. Deliberate changes but connected with
international developments

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2. Main change areas

1. Traditional degree programmes

U. Leuven

Central

- *new programmes* : Courses for the 21st Century
Initiation to Entrepreneurship
- *re-orienting*: Operation Rationalisation
Decree of 1991
- *internationalisation*: International Relations Office
/ European programmes

Decentral level: lot of changes, but not in Law School

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U. Gent

Central

- *re-orienting*: educational innovation
 - internal education fund
- *internationalisation*: International Relations Office
 - / strong involvement in and outside European progr.

Decentral: changes in Engineering, Economics and Medicine
but not in Arts

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BSE

reforms as result of EKON 2000:

developing a quality system based on ISO 9001

- *new*: option Financial Policy and Investment

- *re-orienting*: revision of curricula

introduction business game and project work

open college

- *internationalisation*: language education

English-language programme

C. Gent

Central

- *new*: III (instead of kine)
- *re-orienting*: identical course programmes; polyvalence
quality assessment, educational innovation
(new technologies)
- *internationalisation*: involvement in 8 programmes
(4 European)

Decentral: changes in three departments

2. Life-long learning structures

U. Leuven:

central level tries to structure continuing education

- consultants & steering committees

faculties are reluctant towards this centralisation process

decentral level: continuing education in some faculties

U.Gent:

- focus on academic and advanced academic courses

(no central service for continuing and post-academic education)

- *decentral level*: continuing education in some faculties

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BSE

especially EMS (including e-study)

C.Gent:

focus on basic courses, limited attention for other educational structures

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3. External stakeholders

Universities:

Central level: pro forma representation

Decentral level:

Faculties of Engineering and Economics:
advisory committees (industry)

Other faculties: informal contacts and professional contacts

Colleges

Central: not pro forma, but limited influence

Decentral: contact with business world; training in industry

3. Origin of the change process

U. Leuven

- *internal dynamics*

- ✓ *role of the actors*

 - the General Bureau is the central actor

 - but in general the central level plays a limited role

- ✓ *motivations and attitudes*

 - decentralisation

- ✓ *central ideas*

 - the university must be aware of tendencies in society

 - but must not be liable to the hype of the moment

- ✓ *interaction between levels*

 - as a rule, no direct intervention from the central level

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- *external conditions and interactions*

'relative autonomy' from the government
economic factors irrelevant at central level
(no match, no direct involvement)

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U. Gent

- *internal dynamics*

- ✓ *role of the actors*

before 1991: the central actor is the Academic Council

after 1991: the Management Committee

but in general the central level plays a limited role

- ✓ *motivations and attitudes*

decentralisation

- ✓ *central ideas*

expectations of the social environment (alumni) are important

but this idea is not turned into regulations, is only a guideline

- ✓ *interaction between levels*

decentral autonomy but central interventions

BSE

- *internal dynamics*

- ✓ *role of the actors*

the Academic Council is the highest authority
concerning education

the roles of the actors are defined by the quality system

- ✓ *motivations and attitudes*: business oriented university training

- ✓ *central ideas*: to maximise chances and to minimise limitations

therefore: quality project

continuous revision curricula to fit the needs of the
students and of the labour market

(strengthening the business economic orientation)

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✓ *interaction between levels*

view of the central level: quality improvement

view of the teaching staff: bureaucratisation

- *external conditions and interactions*

- guest professors

- practical co-operation

- resonance councils

- external audits

- demand-driven content of curricula

- government: match regarding quality assurance

- restricted by too little flexible regulations

- BSE uses European funds

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C. Gent

- *internal dynamics*

- ✓ *role of the actors*

in general the central level is important

the central body is the Board of Governors

there are unofficial meetings between the actors

- ✓ *motivations and attitudes*

create a quality culture

- ✓ *central ideas*

the relationship with the economy must be one

of co-operation, not of domination

- ✓ *interaction between levels: the central level patronises*

but is less centralist than before the merger

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- *external conditions and interactions*

the decree is regarded as the year zero: new mission and tasks
reviews

vocational and course profiles

limited involvement of the economy at the central level

contacts: practical training, professional organisations,
guest professors

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4. Outcomes of the change process